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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [SCUL](#) [SOCI](#) [PO](#)

SUBJECT: SOCIAL DEMOCRATS AND SOCIALISTS BOTH CLAIM VICTORY  
IN PORTUGUESE LOCAL ELECTIONS

REF: A. LISBON 537

[B](#). LISBON 516

[1](#)1. (U) As anticipated, the Social Democrats (PSD) retained the majority of Portugal's 308 mayoral posts, while the Socialists (PS) won the most number of votes -- an estimated 2 million to PSD's 1 million -- in the October 11 local elections (ref A). Both parties claimed victory. Voter turnout was 59 percent, down from 61 percent in 2005. On September 27, the Socialist Party led by PM Jose Socrates was re-elected to head the national Parliament (ref B).

[1](#)2. (U) Overall, the right-of-center Social Democrats obtained 140 mayoral posts, including 23 in coalition with the Popular Party (down 17 from 2005), while the left-of-center Socialists won 131 posts, an increase of 21. The Communist Party trailed with 28 mayoral posts, down from 32 in 2005. Socialist mayor Antonio Costa was re-elected in Lisbon with 44 percent over Social Democrat rival Santana Lopes with 39 percent. This result allows Costa to have an absolute majority in the Lisbon City Council. Incumbent Social Democrat Rui Rio was re-elected as mayor in Porto with 47 percent over his Socialist rival's 35 percent.

[1](#)3. (U) Incumbent Prime Minister Socrates was sworn in as the new prime minister on October 12 in the wake of September 27 parliamentary elections. Immediately after his swearing-in, Socrates announced that he will begin informal dialogue with leaders of opposition parties to discuss possible cooperation with his government. During the first plenary session of the newly elected parliament, scheduled for October 15, new deputies will take office and incumbent Jaime Gama will be nominated speaker by the ruling Socialist party. Socrates will present his government program to Parliament within 10 days, which will be the first vote that Socrates needs to win to establish the stability of his minority government.

[1](#)4. (U) Media reaction: The October 11 municipal elections received extensive coverage in Portuguese media. Under headings such as "Bittersweet Victory for the PSD in Local Elections," "PS with Positive Outcome in the War against PSD," and "Renovation Starts in Four Years," local press echoed the overall opinion voiced by analysts that although the Social Democrats won the majority of the mayoral posts, the final results were positive for the Socialists. Portuguese newspapers noted the disappointing results obtained by the radical left-wing Left Bloc and the conservative Popular Party, pointing to the lack of strong local party machinery as a possible factor. Media reports further highlighted that although 52 municipalities changed their political party in the elections, local political power is still dominated by the center-right PSD and the center-left PS, with the Communists losing ground but still managing to maintain significant local representation in certain rural areas.

[1](#)5. (SBU) Comment: The election results confirmed the largely

personality-driven nature of Portuguese local elections and the strength of the PSD's local political apparatus. Nonetheless, the PSD, while managing to hold onto the majority of mayoral seats as anticipated, lost 17 seats due in part to the weak leadership and poorly run national campaign of PSD president Manuela Ferreira Leite. Post will report septel on the formation of the new Socialist government and selection of cabinet ministers.

For more reporting from Embassy Lisbon and information about Portugal, please see our Intelink site:

<http://www.intelink.sgov.gov/wiki/portal:portugal>  
BALLARD